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Collaboration within the United Nations system on child protection

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/145, provides an overview of collaboration among various actors in the United Nations system in the area of child protection, since the previous report on the topic (A/68/253). It takes into account information provided by Member States and relevant entities of the United Nations system.

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I. Introduction

1. Collaboration among United Nations entities has led to definitive progress in the protection of children from violence, exploitation and abuse across the globe. Notwithstanding such advancements, children worldwide continue to face violations of their rights. Many root causes of harm to children, such as armed conflict, inequality, discrimination and harmful social norms, are long-standing and persistent. Children in today's world face unprecedented threats to their safety and well-being, given that serious incidents of violence continue to compromise their development, the number of protracted and new conflicts continues to grow, the global refugee and migration crisis presents perilous circumstances for children, including statelessness, forcible displacement and separation, the hazard of sexual exploitation through information and communications technologies is increasing and the threat of violent extremism imparts a pressing need for lasting solutions to poverty, poor governance, political grievances and the lack of opportunities for young people. In Europe and other regions, the refugee and migration crisis is taking a toll on children's lives and rights at a magnitude not seen since the end of the Second World War. In the Syrian Arab Republic and many other countries, the lives of millions of children are affected by conflict, violence and fear, with death, injury, displacement and the deprivation of education, health care and other basic rights occurring on a massive scale.

2. Strengthened collaboration within the United Nations system and in partnership with non-governmental organizations is essential for the effective prevention of and response to emergent child-protection challenges. Collaboration is also needed to capture such unique and timely opportunities as those presented by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which addresses crucial protection concerns and includes for the first time in the international development agenda a specific target, under Sustainable Development Goal 16, on ending all forms of violence against children (target 16.2). Collaboration by the United Nations on national implementation efforts from the outset will support the implementation of the target.

3. The present report examines collaboration among United Nations actors on child protection and documents key results achieved since the previous report on the subject (A/68/253). It is presented at a strategic moment, given that 2016 marks 10 years since the issuance of the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299) and 20 years since the holding of the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and the issuance of the study on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306).

II. Key mandates and roles

4. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is mandated by the General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, help meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.[1] UNICEF is the

[1] The General Assembly established UNICEF by resolution 57 (I) of 11 December 1946 and subsequently expanded it by resolution 417 (V) of 1 December 1950 and resolution 802 (VIII) of 6 October 1953. Its work is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of 1989.

lead agency of the United Nations for child protection. It is also a member of the Global Protection Cluster and chair of the global child protection area of responsibility; the lead agency in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee of the Child Protection Working Group; co-lead, with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), of the gender-based violence area of responsibility; co-lead of the Education Cluster; and a key member of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. The contribution of UNICEF to national and international child protection efforts is defined by its child protection strategy (E/ICEF/2008/5/Rev.1). UNICEF has a programmatic presence in more than 190 countries, territories and areas. It co-chairs the country task forces on monitoring and reporting and has a leading role in country-level child protection subclusters and the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.

5. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is mandated to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all rights established in the Charter of the United Nations and international human rights laws and treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.[2] OHCHR carries out a range of programmatic activities through its field presence and monitors and reports on human rights violations, including those involving children. OHCHR is also a member of the Global Protection Cluster. In addition, it provides support to United Nations treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

6. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is mandated by the General Assembly to provide protection to refugees and, together with Governments, seek permanent solutions to the problems of refugees.[3] It supervises the application of international instruments for refugee protection, in particular the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, of 1951. Over the years, the Assembly has expanded the mandate of UNHCR to various groups of people who are not covered by the Convention, including returnees, stateless persons and, in some situations, internally displaced persons.[4] UNHCR is the Global Cluster Lead Agency for Protection and the lead agency for the coordination of child protection in refugee settings. Responding to the specific needs of children is an operational priority and central to the mandate of UNHCR, particularly in the light of the high proportion of girls and boys among displaced and stateless populations and their unique protection risks.

7. The mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict was established by the General Assembly, in its resolution 51/77,[5] to enhance the protection of children affected by armed conflict and foster international cooperation. To that end, the Special Representative engages

[2] OHCHR is guided in its work by the mandate provided by General Assembly resolution 48/141, the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent human rights instruments.

[3] See the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 428 (V).

[4] See OHCHR, Executive Committee Conclusion on children at risk, No. 107 (LVII), 5 October 2007.

[5] The General Assembly established the mandate of the Special Representative for a period of three years, in 1997. The Assembly has since extended the mandate five times.

with partners across the United Nations, raises awareness and conducts advocacy, including high-level engagement with parties to conflict regarding the use and recruitment of children and other grave violations. The Special Representative reports annually to the Assembly and the Human Rights Council and is the focal point for preparing the annual report of the Secretary-General, country-specific reports on children and armed conflict to the Security Council and quarterly updates to the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. The Special Representative also supports the Working Group with regard to conclusions on country-specific reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. The Special Representative chairs the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, which brings together senior managers from across the United Nations, and fosters collaborative relations with non-governmental organizations.

8. The Special Representative engages with sanctions committees and panels of experts to provide information on grave violations of the rights of children and brief sanctions committees when grave violations against children are criteria for designation in sanctions regimes. In some instances, they are combined briefings with the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict or joint briefings with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

9. The mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children is to promote the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children, guided by General Assembly resolution 62/141.[6] The Special Representative pursues a multifaceted strategy to prevent and address children's exposure to violence, including protection from injury, neglect, ill-treatment, abuse and exploitation and any other form of violence in all contexts. The strategy is implemented through enhancing global understanding of the issue, supporting legal and policy action, addressing harmful social norms, enhancing partnerships and knowledge and promoting mainstreaming in the policy agenda. The Special Representative prioritizes three action areas to advance progress on the Sustainable Development Goals relating to the prevention of violence: (a) development of national strategies to prevent and respond to all forms of violence; (b) introduction of a legal ban on all forms of violence against children in all settings; and (c) consolidation of research and national systems for data collection, analysis and dissemination.

10. The Special Representative works to strengthen the ratification and implementation of international standards and support regional and national follow-up to the United Nations study on violence against children. Progress made in that regard is highlighted in the report on the global survey on violence against children, entitled "Toward a world free from violence". The Special Representative builds strategic partnerships, raises awareness, consolidates knowledge and conducts field missions to support national efforts and provide expert advice. The Special Representative chairs the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children, a unifying platform for consultation, policy formulation and the mainstreaming of concerns relating to violence against children that brings together all child protection actors of the United Nations system, including OHCHR, UNICEF, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

[6] In 2012, the General Assembly, in its resolution 67/152, extended the mandate for a further three years.

11. In 1990, the Human Rights Council mandated the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to analyse the root causes and identify new patterns of the phenomena, exchange good practices to combat them and promote the prevention and rehabilitation of children.

12. Child protection actors of the United Nations system engage in such Organization-wide initiatives as the Human Rights Up Front initiative, follow-up to recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the advancement of the 2030 Agenda. They also contribute to the response of the United Nations to sexual exploitation and abuse by working with the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

III. Normative framework and global commitments

13. International human rights instruments and standards and political commitments undertaken by the international community help to ensure the consistency and complementarity of child protection efforts across the United Nations system. Child protection actors of the United Nations system support the drafting, implementation and monitoring of relevant treaties and international standards to continually strengthen the normative framework. The inclusion of a target in the 2030 Agenda, under Sustainable Development Goal 16, on ending all forms of violence against children (target 16.2) stems from effective collaboration and joint advocacy.

14. UNICEF, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, OHCHR, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography have promoted the campaign for the universal ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, particularly on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, since the launch of the campaign, in 2010. The associated results demonstrate the potential beneficial impact of such joint initiatives.

15. For example, UNICEF, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and other partners joined the Pacific Conference on Ending Violence against Children, in 2015, which called for the ratification of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, among other things. With 36 additional ratifications since the launch of the campaign in 2010, a total of 173 States have ratified the Optional Protocol. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has promoted the ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict directly with national authorities and indirectly through regional bodies, creating momentum that has led to 13 new ratifications since 2014, bringing the total to 165 ratifications.

16. In 2015, UNICEF, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and OHCHR supported the League of Arab States in promoting the ratification process of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure in the Arab region. Finally,

South Sudan and Somalia became the 195th and 196th States parties to the Convention, bringing the achievement of universal ratification within reach.

17. Stemming from a collaborative effort of more than 20 entities of the United Nations system and other partners, the International Small Arms Control Standards are important new standards that provide clear, practical and comprehensive guidance to practitioners and policymakers on fundamental aspects of small arms and light weapons control, including those that specifically relate to child protection. The standards are used by the more than 20 entities of the United Nations system that make up the Coordinating Action on Small Arms.

18. The development of the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/194, is a collaborative effort supported by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNODC, OHCHR, UNICEF and others to improve standards of justice for children. Those entities continue to cooperate with regional organizations, government officials and civil society, including in Latin America and East Asia, on the dissemination and implementation of the Model Strategies. The Human Rights Council, OHCHR, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and UNODC coordinate their activities relating to the administration of justice, in accordance with Assembly resolution 69/172.

IV. United Nations collaboration on child protection

A. Mechanisms of collaboration among child protection actors of the United Nations system

19. Several Headquarters-level mechanisms facilitate collaboration on child protection within and beyond the United Nations system. Principal among them is the child protection area of responsibility of the Global Protection Cluster, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children and the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. Other established mechanisms include: the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons; the Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities; the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group; the Inter-Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children; the Global Migration Group; the Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings; the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development; the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues; the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action; and the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism Technical Reference Group.

20. From 2006 to 2016, the child protection area of responsibility was the global-level forum for the coordination of humanitarian action on child protection in non-refugee situations, bringing together diverse partners, including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNHCR, ILO, UNICEF, non-governmental organizations, academics and others. The membership of the area of responsibility developed an important body of work, including the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, in 2012. Following an internal review process,

the membership of the area of responsibility formed the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, in 2016, co-led by UNICEF and a rotating international non-governmental organization member. The Alliance will provide technical leadership on child protection in humanitarian settings, including refugee contexts, as well as on preparedness and post-emergency transition and recovery, and will be the custodian of the Minimum Standards. The area of responsibility remains under UNICEF leadership, under the overall coordination of the UNHCR-led Global Protection Cluster, supporting the coordination of humanitarian efforts to protect children within the cluster coordination reference model of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.[7]

21. The Global Partnership to End Violence against Children (#ENDviolence), launched in 2016, is a high-level mechanism for collaboration and the implementation at the country level of the Sustainable Development Goals that pertain to the safety and security of children. It brings together stakeholders from across the world to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, WHO and many other United Nations entities, as well as Governments, civil society organizations, foundations, leaders of the faith-based community, the private sector and young people participate in the Partnership, which is aimed at building political will, accelerating action and strengthening collaboration in order to change attitudes and social norms.

22. The Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities is a global multi-stakeholder coalition representing more than 260 organizations, including the child protection task force, which uses evidence-based advocacy and awareness-raising to reduce the risk of institutionalization for children with disabilities. The United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is another joint initiative aimed at strengthening the work done by United Nations agencies for persons with disabilities. Building on its membership in the Partnership, dozens of UNFPA country offices support persons with disabilities, including through the "We decide" programme, which promotes the rights and social inclusion of adolescents and young people, in particular girls, living with disabilities.

23. With respect to trafficking, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons brings together 16 member agencies, 6 of which also participate in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group working group to protect children from the threat of trafficking, including UNHCR, ILO, UNODC, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF and OHCHR.

24. The Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group brings together United Nations actors to promote the integration of such child protection concerns as the implementation of international standards, the promotion of accountability, guidance on early access to legal aid and the protection of children from violence in the justice system.

25. In addition to the formal mechanisms, child protection actors of the United Nations system engage regularly with Member States to strategize with regard to

[7] The Global Protection Cluster operations cell provides support to 28 field-level clusters, including subclusters on child protection, which are responsible for ensuring coherent protection programming in response to identified needs.

child protection challenges, meet with them to review priorities and organize joint panels and common positions on issues of shared concern. By designing and carrying out programmes that contribute to the safety and well-being of children, their efforts are mutually reinforcing. For example, the food assistance programmes of the World Food Programme provide life-saving food assistance in emergency, post-emergency and fragile contexts, thereby contributing to the creation of protective environments for children.

26. At the field level, United Nations agencies collaborate on the delivery of humanitarian assistance and child protection programmes. In 2015, they provided vital support in the area of child protection in all major humanitarian crises, including the massive population movements to Europe, which include a large influx of child refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. UNICEF, working closely with UNHCR and partners, established child-friendly spaces in six reception facilities and transit locations in the Western Balkans that provided stress management and psychosocial support, family reunification services and recreational and basic education activities for approximately 81,000 children. In Croatia, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, tens of thousands of children at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, including trafficking, benefited from safe spaces and information about the risks associated with trafficking.[8]

B. Cooperation in the context of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Council

27. United Nations actors, particularly OHCHR, UNICEF, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, collaborate on child protection with human rights treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Council and Special Procedures Division and the universal periodic review.

28. UNICEF is a key interlocutor with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, submitting reports, sending representatives to pre-session working groups and sessions, raising protection issues and supporting follow-up to the concluding observations made by the Committee. The two Special Representatives and the Special Rapporteur also cooperate with the Committee, meeting regularly with the Chair and members to exchange information, promote joint advocacy, advance thematic discussions and the development of general comments and support follow-up to the Committee's recommendations and concluding observations.

29. The Human Rights Council is another important forum for cooperation with and among child protection actors, including through interactive dialogue with mandate holders. Its annual day of discussion on the rights of the child includes thematic panels focusing on priority issues relating to child protection. In 2016, the focus of the panel was on protecting children from sexual exploitation through information and communications technology. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNICEF, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child

[8] UNICEF, *Annual Report 2015*. Available from www.unicef.org/publications/index_92018.html.

prostitution and child pornography and OHCHR collaborated closely on the day of the discussion and called for a safe, inclusive and empowering digital agenda for children and the enhanced collaboration and monitoring of progress in that area. In another example, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict briefed a special session of the Human Rights Council in 2014 on the situation in Iraq, providing an important opportunity to highlight protection concerns.

C. Advocacy, awareness-raising and outreach

30. Child protection actors work jointly and independently on advocacy, awareness-raising and outreach to promote awareness of child protection matters in relevant venues. Efforts include resource mobilization, information-sharing mechanisms and public information initiatives. A number of global initiatives are aimed at raising awareness of violence against children, including in situations of armed conflict, and promoting child protection at various levels.

31. In 2014, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF launched the "Children, not soldiers" campaign, which is aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children by national security forces in conflict. The campaign has received broad support from Member States, United Nations actors, non-governmental organization partners, regional organizations and the general public. The Security Council and the General Assembly welcomed the campaign and requested regular updates through the report of the Special Representative.

32. As a result of the campaign's well-coordinated effort, armed forces have released hundreds of children and Governments have adopted new laws criminalizing underage recruitment, developed age-assessment mechanisms and conducted national awareness-raising campaigns. All eight of the campaign's original countries of focus have signed action plans committing to prevent and end the recruitment and use of children by national security forces, namely, Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen. Notably, the National Army of Chad completed the requirements for the implementation of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the national armed forces and, in 2014, was therefore delisted from the list contained in annex I to the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (see A/68/878, annex I). Subsequently, the United Nations and the Government of Chad agreed upon a protocol on the handover of children to ensure the protection of children separated from armed groups, including specific provisions regulating detention. Those standard operating procedures built on previous agreements signed with the Governments of Mali, Somalia and Uganda. Provisions on protection were also included in the concept of operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force established to fight Boko Haram.

33. The Special Representative, UNICEF, the country task forces on monitoring and reporting and other partners are working together to support the seven remaining Governments to implement action plans. Several have made progress. The Government of Afghanistan criminalized the recruitment of children and endorsed a road map for accelerating the implementation of its action plan and age verification guidelines. The Democratic Republic of the Congo named a presidential

adviser to address sexual violence and child recruitment and adopted a road map for accelerating the implementation of the action plan. Somalia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, established a child protection unit in the national armed forces and set up a mechanism for handover to the United Nations of children found in its army. In Myanmar, close to 750 children and young people recruited as children have been released from the army, and the country signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

34. United Nations actors, in particular UNICEF, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and members of field-level child protection subclusters, also engage with non-State armed groups regarding the recruitment and use of children and other child protection concerns, both in the context of and outside of peace processes. For example, the child protection subcluster engaged in advocacy with parties to the conflict in Kachin State in Myanmar to prevent the use of boarding houses and education facilities for military purposes.

35. Upon invitation, UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict engaged directly with parties to the Colombian peace process, the Government of Colombia and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo, in Havana. Following sustained advocacy by the Special Representative and the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, co-chaired by UNICEF and the Resident Coordinator, the group committed to stop the recruitment and use of children under 18 years of age and to release children under 15 years of age. In 2016, the Special Representative and UNICEF witnessed the signing of the agreement between the Government and the group to separate and reintegrate all children under 18 years of age associated with the group. The Special Representative, UNICEF and IOM are supporting the preparations for the release of the children from the group.

36. UNICEF partners with ILO on economic reintegration activities for children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups in order to identify alternative youth employment and livelihood strategies. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict also engages with United Nations commissions of inquiry to share information and strengthen investigations and with IOM and others to include provisions on the reintegration of children in relevant programming.

37. The goals of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, launched in 2016, are to enable girls at risk of child marriage to choose and direct their own futures, support households in demonstrating positive attitudes towards adolescent girls and strengthen service delivery systems. It also seeks to use robust data to inform policies and laws so that they promote the rights of adolescent girls. The Programme targets girls (ages 10 to 19) at risk of child marriage or already in union in 12 countries, including Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, the Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia, and contributes to progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 5 target on harmful traditional practices, including child marriage (target 5.3). The adoption by the Human Rights Council in 2015 of a new resolution recognizing child marriage as a violation of human rights is also a noteworthy development.

38. Together for Girls is a global private-public partnership that includes five United Nations agencies. It is aimed at ending violence against children, especially sexual violence against girls, using surveys on violence against children to gather and present comprehensive data to support the development and implementation of country-level policy and action plans. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children conducts high-level advocacy missions to support collaboration and the development of and follow-up to the surveys.

39. On the basis of consultations with stakeholders, including UNICEF, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and UNDP, UNHCR launched the "#IBelong" campaign to end statelessness in 10 years, in 2014. The campaign's global action plan provides a framework for achieving its goals, including actions relating to the prevention and reduction of childhood statelessness. In 2016, UNHCR and UNICEF formed a new coalition to address childhood statelessness and every child's right to a nationality.

40. Advocacy and increased awareness also drive multi-country efforts relating to online sexual exploitation of children. The global programme to address online child sexual exploitation builds the capacity of Governments, civil society and the private sector to tackle the issue. UNICEF, in collaboration with partners, implements the programme in 17 countries, with the support of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, under the WePROTECT global alliance to end the sexual exploitation of children online and the active participation of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. As a result of the second WePROTECT Children Online Global Summit, held in the United Arab Emirates in 2015, 70 countries have signed global commitments to protect children from online sexual exploitation and implement a coordinated response at the country level.

41. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children facilitated the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying, including cyberbullying, in collaboration with numerous partners, notably UNICEF, WHO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Committee on the Rights of the Child, national child rights organizations, civil society and academic institutions. The report was prepared pursuant to the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/158. The preparation entailed an expert consultation, undertaken in 2016 in cooperation with the UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti, and work with over one-hundred thousand users of the UNICEF U-Report social messaging tool based on short message service (SMS) technology, who are known as "U-Reporters", to ensure the representative participation of children and young people. The collaboration has helped to identify significant developments, pressing challenges and areas for action for the prevention of and response to bullying and cyberbullying.

42. Additional multi-stakeholder advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives include No Lost Generation, a partnership of United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, Governments, donors, the private sector and young people, launched in 2013 to articulate concerns and advocate for opportunities for children affected by the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic; the 2015 road map for the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies; the Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting; and the Every Hour

Matters campaign to increase awareness about the need for timely access to post-rape care, including for girls.

43. To mark the tenth anniversary of the issuance of the United Nations study on violence against children and accelerate progress in the achievement of target 16.2 of Sustainable Development Goal 16, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, in cooperation with United Nations entities, Governments, civil society and children, launched the High Time to end violence against children initiative, in 2016. The social mobilization initiative builds upon the actions of Governments and other key stakeholders, striving to close the gap between political commitments and action and promoting a culture of respect for children's rights and zero tolerance for violence.

D. Law reform to safeguard children from violence, exploitation and abuse

44. Child protection actors of the United Nations system push for national legislation reform to prohibit all forms of violence against children, ensure children's protection, recovery and reintegration and hold perpetrators to account. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, OHCHR, UNICEF, ILO, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and others provide technical support for law reform to Member States in the fields of juvenile justice, family law, alternative care, protection from child labour, harmful practices, trafficking, sale, sexual exploitation and corporal punishment and other areas.

45. The number of countries with a comprehensive legal ban on violence against children is increasing. By the end of 2014, 71 countries supported the strengthening of systems of justice for children, with 10 countries adopting progressive laws. In addition, 58 countries reported adopting alternative care policies consistent with the 2009 guidelines, more than 50 countries prohibited all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment in the home (compared with 36 in 2013) and at least 54 more States expressed a commitment to full prohibition.[9] The global conference hosted by the Government of Austria under the theme "Towards childhoods free from corporal punishment" in 2016 stimulated further progress by gathering high-level representatives of approximately 70 countries, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and other child protection leaders.

46. Nine countries — Algeria, Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Kenya, Mongolia and Oman — have promoted legal reforms to strengthen the protection of children from child labour, following the participation of over 150 Member States, UNICEF, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society actors in the third Global Conference on Child Labour, held in Brasilia from 8 to 10 October 2013, which culminated in the Brasilia Declaration on Child Labour. In India, United Nations actors have collaborated to support the

[9] See www.endcorporalpunishment.org.

Government's roll-out of the Right to Education Act and the integrated child protection scheme. Also, the 15 years of collaborative action against child labour by UNICEF and ILO culminated in 2015 with nearly 15.5 million children — almost three times more than originally planned — having been reached through education, child protection and communication for development programmes.

47. Together with other strategies, legislative reform contributes to efforts to end the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting. The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting supports the establishment and enforcement of legal and policy frameworks that promote the abandonment of the practice. The Joint Programme also supports service provision and efforts to change social norms through community-based activities, advocacy and public outreach and by supporting Governments, communities, women and girls. To date, 12 of 17 programme countries have passed national legislation criminalizing female genital mutilation/cutting: Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda. Those initiatives also contribute to advancing target 5.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 5, which placed female genital mutilation/cutting on the international development agenda for the first time. In 2014, the General Assembly, in its resolution 69/150, commended the continued efforts and actions undertaken to implement its resolution 67/146 on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations. Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices (2014), those Committees' first joint recommendation/comment, was issued during the reporting period.

E. Information-gathering, mapping, data collection and research

48. Child protection actors of the United Nations system recognize the importance of strengthening evidence to inform policies and programmes, monitor progress and evaluate interventions. In that regard, those actors support the improvement of national data collection systems and promote national-level research. They collaborate with regard to data collection, information technology and field missions. For example, in 2015, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and UNICEF collaborated with other United Nations agencies to launch national data surveys and response plans on violence against children during more than 40 field missions to 25 countries, most recently Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi and Nigeria.

49. In November 2015, a joint technical field mission to the Philippines by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF supported the strengthening of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and provided guidance towards the full implementation of the United Nations-Moro Islamic Liberation Front action plan to prevent and end the recruitment and/or use of children, which led to action by the Government of the Philippines to prevent further violations and the initiation of a strategic partnership with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples.

50. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict researches and produces working papers that clarify complex conflict-related child protection issues and policies. In 2014, the Office of the Special Representative,

UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO issued a guidance note on protecting schools and hospitals, in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1998 (2011).

51. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children cooperates with various United Nations actors to consolidate knowledge through research and the development and publication of related studies and recommendations. As a result of those efforts two thematic reports were launched, on promoting restorative justice for children, in 2013, and on safeguarding the rights of girls in the criminal justice system: preventing violence, stigmatization and deprivation of liberty, in 2015, in cooperation with UNODC and the Governments of Austria, Chile, Norway and Thailand.

52. Know Violence in Childhood is a global learning initiative that aims at building better lives for boys and girls, focusing on the prevention of interpersonal violence against children. The initiative, which brings together a diverse set of child protection actors, including UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, consolidates evidence to address violence in childhood, support prevention efforts and inform policymaking and programming.

53. Collaboration on research, data collection and analysis includes the production of global studies on key dimensions of child protection. Primary among them are the following: the global study on the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism conducted in 2016 and led by End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes with the support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNICEF, UNODC, the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; the Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, issued in 2016, which are the result of a collaborative effort of 18 organizations, including End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes, UNICEF and OHCHR, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children; and the global study on legal aid, currently under way and led by UNDP and UNODC.

54. Conducting the global study on children deprived of liberty is a priority for child protection actors of the United Nations system.[10] The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children leads a task force to facilitate the study's development, with the participation of OHCHR, UNODC, UNICEF, UNHCR, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and others and in consultation with Member States, civil society, academia and children. Expert group discussions in East Asia and Latin America, including, most recently, in Argentina, identified regional priorities for preventing the deprivation of liberty and strengthening oversight, inspection and monitoring in places where children are deprived of liberty within the justice system. The global study aims at consolidating data, outlining good practices, providing recommendations, supporting the

[10] General Assembly resolution 69/157 followed a recommendation by the Committee on the Rights of the Child that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth international study on children deprived of their liberty in accordance with article 45 (c) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (see A/69/41).

implementation of international standards, enhancing accountability and promoting attitude and behavioural change with regard to children in detention.

55. The Human Rights Council Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, in conjunction with OHCHR, held a global consultation in 2014 on the right to challenge the lawfulness of detention before court. The consultation supported the preparation of the first draft principles and guidelines on the issue pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 20/16. In the context of the consultation, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict emphasized that basic legal safeguards must be provided in all circumstances for children who are deprived of liberty, including if they are detained by military or security services. Other forums relating to the deprivation of liberty of children under national security and counter-terrorism laws have included the subregional workshops on the treatment of children allegedly involved with Boko Haram as offenders, victims and/or witnesses of crime, held in 2015, and the workshop on children associated with violent extremist groups, organized by UNODC in Senegal in 2016. The second global round table on reception and alternatives to detention, held in Toronto, Canada, in 2015 and organized by UNHCR, with the support of IOM, UNICEF and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, focused on alternatives to immigration detention, highlighting good practices in care arrangements for unaccompanied or separated children and children in families.

56. ILO and UNICEF support data collection on the extent, characteristics and determinants of child labour through the ILO Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour and UNICEF multiple indicator cluster surveys. Around 70 countries have improved the quality of their data by means of large-scale national household surveys or multiple indicator cluster surveys. Understanding Children's Work, an inter-agency research cooperation programme bringing together ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank, contributes to defining measurement criteria on child labour, including thresholds for unpaid hazardous household services.

57. UNICEF, the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, UNFPA and other child protection actors prioritize advancements in innovative approaches to information management. In that regard, the Primero project brings coherence to child protection-related information management in emergencies and provides centrally supported software for data relating to case management and referral for the most vulnerable children, gender-based violence and grave violations against children. Primero has been rolled out in Lebanon, the Philippines and Sierra Leone, with implementation in additional locations planned.

F. Capacity-building, technical assistance and resources

58. Developing new resources and guidance to build capacity, professionalize the child protection sector and provide technical assistance at the global and national levels are important areas of collaboration.

59. At the global level, United Nations actors have collaborated to spearhead several new resources for combating violence against children. The report entitled "INSPIRE: seven strategies for ending violence against children" issued in 2016, is a collaboration led by WHO that provides strategies to promote prevention programmes and services to reduce violence against children. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children collaborated

with UNICEF on the report entitled "Ending violence against children: six strategies for action", issued in 2014, and with WHO on the "Global status report on violence prevention 2014" and the global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system within a national multi-sectoral response to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children, in line with WHO resolution 69.5 of 28 May 2016.

60. For the first time, the United Nations has developed guidance on child-focused victim assistance, which is referenced in the new United Nations policy on victim assistance in mine action. Although the guidance focuses on survivors of explosive devices, it may also be used to improve assistance to child survivors of all forms of violence. Also in the area of mine action, UNICEF and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States of America developed a new technical training package and course on strengthening national injury surveillance systems.

61. Child protection actors throughout the United Nations system are committed to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel, in particular responding to increased reports of such abuse in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For example, UNICEF and partners have scaled up assistance to child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, providing medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, case management and safety plans for victims and witnesses. At the global level, the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse is leading a wide range of United Nations actors on the development of protocols to strengthen inter-agency cooperation, victim assistance and information-sharing on sexual exploitation and abuse.

62. Other recent guidelines and guidance relating to child protection includes the following documents: the guidelines entitled "Preventing violence: evaluating outcomes of parenting programmes", developed by UNICEF, WHO and the University of Cape Town in 2013; the "Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict", spearheaded by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack and the Governments of Argentina and Norway in 2015; the update of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee "Guidelines for gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian settings"; and the "Guidelines on caring for child survivors of sexual abuse", rolled out by UNICEF and the International Rescue Committee in 2015. Another collaborative effort to professionalize the child protection sector is the post-graduate diploma in child protection in emergencies, developed by UNICEF, the child protection area of responsibility and Save the Children in 2014.

63. Training programmes are another opportunity for strategic cooperation. UNICEF conducts trainings on monitoring, reporting and responding to violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict, often in coordination with other country task forces on monitoring and reporting, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and/or other mission components. In 2015, UNICEF and partners conducted monitoring and reporting mechanism trainings in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali and South Sudan. Three important technical documents on the monitoring and reporting mechanism are the guidelines, field manual and the

compilation of good practices on the subject,[11] as well as the related training modules.

G. Regional partnerships for child protection

64. To support the prioritization of child protection within regional policy agendas, United Nations actors collaborate with regional organizations and institutions, including the European Union, the Council of Europe, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of American States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children. Such collaboration is intended to enhance States' accountability for the protection of children's rights and support the acceleration of national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

65. ASEAN and the Council of Europe, with the support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, have aligned new regional plans on violence against children with the 2030 Agenda. The African Union adopted Africa's Agenda for Children 2040, which aims at ending violence against children, and similar efforts are being promoted in other regions. The Special Representative hosts annual cross-regional meetings to share experiences and advance the protection of children from violence. In 2016, the annual meeting highlighted the advancement of the 2030 Agenda, especially target 16.2 of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

66. In 2013, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict signed a declaration of intent with the Peace and Security Department of the African Union Commission, setting out joint priorities to be achieved, in partnership with UNICEF, to enhance the mainstreaming of child protection within African Union policies and operations. Support for the operationalization of the declaration is provided by the African Union in the context of its strategic plan for 2015-2017 and the secondment of a child protection adviser from UNICEF to the Peace and Security Department.

67. In 2014, United Nations actors supported the League of Arab States in developing a cooperation agreement to mainstream child protection in the League's peace and security agenda through the enhancement of coordination and information flow, assistance to member States to mainstream child protection concerns, the identification of a high-level focal point for children and armed conflict and the encouragement of member States to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Also in 2014, the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament held a special hearing on the "Children, not soldiers" campaign and the European Parliament established a round table on children's rights to mainstream child protection across parliamentary committees, reflecting ongoing dialogue with United Nations actors on strengthening the application of the European Union Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict.

[11] Available from www.mrmtools.org.

68. NATO works with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on policies, procedures and training on the protection of children in armed conflict. At the NATO Summit, held in Wales, United Kingdom, on 4 and 5 September 2014, member countries of NATO reaffirmed their commitment to carrying out their responsibilities to mainstream child protection and added an adviser on children and armed conflict in the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. In 2016, UNICEF and the Special Representative worked with NATO on a bi-strategic command directive aimed at providing guidance on children and armed conflict and mainstreaming child protection in NATO doctrine, planning, operations, missions, education, training, exercises and evaluation.

69. UNICEF, UNHCR and other partners revised the Regional Framework for the Protection of South Sudanese and Sudanese Refugee Children to support refugee children in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda. As a result, in 2015, 2,700 South Sudanese children were reunited with families and/or caregivers. In 2014, Regional coordination relating to refugee children also included the issuance of the joint UNHCR-UNICEF publication, entitled "Safe and sound: what States can do to ensure respect for the best interests of unaccompanied and separated children in Europe",[12] which contains recommendations to support States in the European Union and the European Free Trade Association in applying the "best interests of the child" principle as a primary consideration when dealing with unaccompanied and separated children.

V. Conclusions

70. The protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation in diverse settings presents complex challenges. In response, United Nations actors have developed dynamic, multisectoral and multi-partner initiatives that take many forms, including joint advocacy, information exchange, coordinated reporting, national policy and legislation, strategic field missions and the strengthening of international legal norms, data and research.

71. Those collaborative efforts have led to such definitive achievements as the delivery of assistance and child protection programmes to millions of children, the inclusion of a Sustainable Development Goal target on ending violence against children, new ratifications of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, increased efforts to tackle such thematic topics as children with disabilities and child marriage, advancements in policy and practice for ending the use of children in conflict, legal reform on corporal punishment, trafficking, harmful practices, child labour and female genital mutilation/cutting, the increased use of information technology for data collection and evidence-based policymaking, programming and reporting, the issuance of guidelines and technical support, investment in strengthening partnerships and accelerating regional progress and a push for progress in such emerging areas of concern as online safety and protection from bullying.

72. Ongoing collaboration at the field and global policy levels is essential for achieving the effective protection of children. Strong partnerships enable child protection actors of the United Nations system to leverage opportunities, such as the

[12] Available from www.unicef.org/protection/files/5423da264.pdf.

implementation of the 2030 Agenda, to end violence, abuse and the exploitation of children. In the light of the difficulties presented by the global refugee and migration crisis and the rise of violent extremism, as well as by community violence and the growing number of armed conflicts, sustained and adequate resources are required to reinforce complementary mandates across the United Nations system and safeguard the rights of children, meet their protection needs and consolidate the progress achieved to date.